Arab. arch. epig. 1997: 8: 282–283
Printed in Denmark. All rights reserved

Arabian archaeology and epigraphy
ISSN 0905-7196

An Inscribed Hasaitic Bronze Plaque

MOHAMMED MARAQTEN
Marburg, Germany

The object (Figs 1 & 2) published here was found around 1985 *c.*1.5 km east of Jabal Berri in northeastern Saudi Arabia, close to the spot where the Nestorian crosses previously published in this journal were discovered[1]. The object is a fragment of a bronze plaque 1.5 mm thick, with a maximum height of 44 mm and a maximum width of 30 mm. It is engraved with three South Arabian letters which measure 9 mm (left), 7 mm (centre) and 9 mm (right) in height. The signs are framed between a border of pendant, dotted triangles (below) and running zig-zag



Fig. 1.
Inscribed bronze plaque fragment from northeastern Saudi Arabia, obverse.

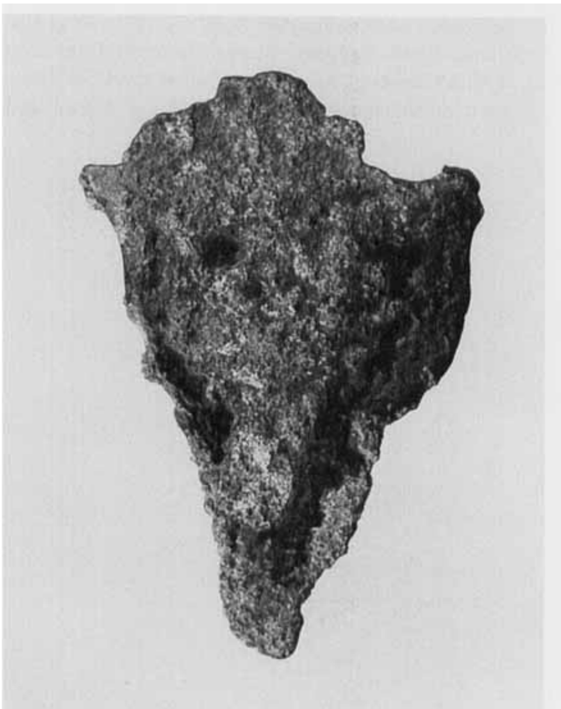


Fig. 2.
Reverse of bronze plaque fragment.

(above). The inscription is to be read from right to left as *fḍl* and represents a personal name. Given the findspot of the piece, it is classifiable as Hasaitic, the name given to the indigenous inscriptions of northeastern Arabia written in South Arabian script[2].

The name *fḍl* corresponds to the North Arabic personal name Faḍl or Fāḍil, and derives from the Arabic root *fḍl*, meaning 'it exceeded, or was, or became redundant, or superfluous, to be excellent, superior'[3]. This implies that the name on our plaque has to be understood as a one-word name: *fa'l* or *fāᶜil*, which may be translated as '(the one who is) outstanding, very good, excellent, superior'. If we were to consider the name as Faḍl, then it would have to be understood as the hypocoristocon of a compound personal name made up of Faḍl plus a theophoric element. However, no compound personal names with the element *fḍl* are attested elsewhere in the inscriptions of pre-Islamic Arabia. Names such as Faḍlallāh[4] are known in the Islamic period, but there are many names which derive solely from the North Arabic root *fḍl*. Faḍl is a well known, indeed typical North Arabic personal name and is a favourite among the bedouin[5]. Examples of names in Classical Arabic which are derived from *fḍl* include Faḍl, Fuḍayl, Mufaḍḍal, Faḍḍāl, Faḍāla, Fāḍila, and Faḍīla[6]. Parallels for this name also occur in the South Arabian inscriptions where, for example, the name *fḍlm* is attested in Hadhramitic[7] and in a Sabaic inscription[8].

References

1. Potts DT. Nestorian crosses from Jabal Berri. *AAE* 5: 1994: 61–65.
2. Potts DT. *The Arabian Gulf in Antiquity*, ii. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990: 69–85.
3. Lane EW. *An Arabic-English Lexicon*. London, 1877: 2411–2413.
4. *Mausū'at as-Sulṭān Qābūs li-asmā al-'arab. Mu'ǧam asmā al-'arab*, ii. Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān, 1991: 1332.
5. Hess JJ. *Beduinennamen aus Zentralarabien*. Heidelberg: Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Kl, 19: 1912: 44.
6. Ibn Duraid, Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Duraid al-Azdī. *Kitāb al-Ištiqāq, ed. Hārūn 'AM. Baghdad: Maktabat al-Muṯannā, 1979:* 64; Caskel W. Ǧamharat an-Nasab: Das genealogische Werk des Hišām Ibn Muḥammad al-Kalbī. Leiden: Brill, 2: 1966:243.
7. RES 5037/2.
8. Ja 511/1. See Jamme A. Inscriptions sud-arabes de la collection Ettore Rossi. *RSO* 30: 1955: 107ff.

Address:
Dr. M. Maraqten
Seminar für Semitistik der Philipps-Universität
D-35032 Marburg/Lahn
Wilhelm-Röpke-Str. 6F